

IV. THE LIFE AND LABORS OF HERACLES

I



ERACLES was the son of Zeus, but he was born into the family of a mortal king. When he was still a youth, being overwhelmed by a madness sent upon him by one of the goddesses, he slew the children of his brother Iphicles. Then, coming to know what he had done, sleep and rest

went from him: he went to Delphi, to the shrine of Apollo, to be purified of his crime.

At Delphi, at the shrine of Apollo, the priestess purified him,

and when she had purified him she uttered this prophecy: "From this day forth thy name shall be, not Alcides, but Heracles. Thou shalt go to Eurystheus, thy cousin, in Mycenæ, and serve him in all things. When the labors he shall lay upon thee are accomplished, and when the rest of thy life is lived out, thou shalt become one of the immortals." Heracles, on hearing these words, set out for Mycenæ.

He stood before his cousin who hated him; he, a towering man, stood before a king who sat there weak and trembling. And Heracles said, "I have come to take up the labors that you will lay upon me; speak now, Eurystheus, and tell me what you would have me do."

Eurystheus, that weak king, looking on the young man who stood as tall and as firm as one of the immortals, had a heart that was filled with hatred. He lifted up his head and he said with a frown:

"There is a lion in Nemea that is stronger and more fierce than any lion known before. Kill that lion, and bring the lion's skin to me that I may know that you have truly performed your task." So Eurystheus said, and Heracles, with neither shield nor arms, went forth from the king's palace to seek and to combat the dread lion of Nemea.

He went on until he came into a country where the fences were overthrown and the fields wasted and the houses empty and fallen. He went on until he came to the waste around that land: there he came on the trail of the lion; it led up the side



of a mountain, and Heracles, without shield or arms, followed the trail.

He heard the roar of the lion. Looking up he saw the beast standing at the mouth of a cavern, huge and dark against the sunset. The lion roared three times, and then it went within the cavern.

Around the mouth were strewn the bones of creatures it had killed and carried there. Heracles looked upon them when he came to the cavern. He went within. Far into the cavern he went, and then he came to where he saw the lion. It was sleeping.

Heracles viewed the terrible bulk of the lion, and then he looked upon his own knotted hands and arms. He remembered that it was told of him that, while still a child of eight months, he had strangled a great serpent that had come to his cradle to devour him. He had grown and his strength had grown too.

So he stood, measuring his strength and the size of the lion. The breath from its mouth and nostrils came heavily to him as the beast slept, gorged with its prey. Then the lion yawned. Heracles sprang on it and put his great hands upon its throat. No growl came out of its mouth, but the great eyes blazed while the terrible paws tore at Heracles. Against the rock Heracles held the beast; strongly he held it, choking it through the skin that was almost impenetrable. Terribly the lion struggled; but the strong hands of the hero held around its throat until it struggled no more.

Then Heracles stripped off that impenetrable skin from the lion's body; he put it upon himself for a cloak. Then, as he went through the forest, he pulled up a young oak tree and trimmed it and made a club for himself. With the lion's skin over him — that skin that no spear or arrow could pierce — and carrying the club in his hand he journeyed on until he came to the palace of King Eurystheus.

The king, seeing coming toward him a towering man all covered with the hide of a monstrous lion, ran and hid himself in a great jar. He lifted the lid up to ask the servants what was the meaning of this terrible appearance. And the servants told him that it was Heracles come back with the skin of the lion of Nemea. On hearing this Eurystheus hid himself again.

He would not speak with Heracles nor have him come near him, so fearful was he. But Heracles was content to be left alone. He sat down in the palace and feasted himself.

The servants came to the king; Eurystheus lifted the lid of the jar and they told him how Heracles was feasting and devouring all the goods in the palace. The king flew into a rage, but still he was fearful of having the hero before him. He issued commands through his heralds ordering Heracles to go forth at once and perform the second of his tasks.

It was to slay the great water snake that made its lair in the swamps of Lerna. Heracles stayed to feast another day, and then, with the lion's skin across his shoulders and the great



club in his hands, he started off. But this time he did not go alone; the boy Iolaus went with him.

Heracles and Iolaus went on until they came to the vast swamp of Lerna. Right in the middle of the swamp was the water snake that was called the Hydra. Nine heads it had, and it raised them up out of the water as the hero and his companion came near. They could not cross the swamp to come to the monster, for man or beast would sink and be lost in it.

The Hydra remained in the middle of the swamp belching mud at the hero and his companion. Then Heracles took up his bow and he shot flaming arrows at its heads. It grew into such a rage that it came through the swamp to attack him. Heracles swung his club. As the Hydra came near he knocked head after head off its body.

But for every head knocked off two grew upon the Hydra. And as he struggled with the monster a huge crab came out of the swamp, and gripping Heracles by the foot tried to draw him in. Then Heracles cried out. The boy Iolaus came; he killed the crab that had come to the Hydra's aid.

Then Heracles laid hands upon the Hydra and drew it out of the swamp. With his club he knocked off a head and he had Iolaus put fire to where it had been, so that two heads might not grow in that place. The life of the Hydra was in its middle head; that head he had not been able to knock off with his club. Now, with his hands he tore it off, and he placed

this head under a great stone so that it could not rise into life again. The Hydra's life was now destroyed. Heracles dipped his arrows into the gall of the monster, making his arrows deadly; no thing that was struck by these arrows afterward could keep its life.

Again he came to Eurystheus's palace, and Eurystheus, seeing him, ran again and hid himself in the jar. Heracles ordered the servants to tell the king that he had returned and that the second labor was accomplished.

Eurystheus, hearing from the servants that Heracles was mild in his ways, came out of the jar. Insolently he spoke. "Twelve labors you have to accomplish for me," said he to Heracles, "and eleven yet remain to be accomplished."

"How?" said Heracles. "Have I not performed two of the labors? Have I not slain the lion of Nemea and the great water snake of Lerna?"

"In the killing of the water snake you were helped by Iolaus," said the king, snapping out his words and looking at Heracles with shifting eyes. "That labor cannot be allowed you."

Heracles would have struck him to the ground. But then he remembered that the crime that he had committed in his madness would have to be expiated by labors performed at the order of this man. He looked full upon Eurystheus and he said, "Tell me of the other labors, and I will go forth from Mycenæ and accomplish them."

Then Eurystheus bade him go and make clean the stables of

King Augeias. Heracles came into that king's country. The smell from the stables was felt for miles around. Countless herds of cattle and goats had been in the stables for years, and because of the uncleanness and the smell that came from it the crops were withered all around. Heracles told the king that he would clean the stables if he were given one tenth of the cattle and the goats for a reward.

The king agreed to this reward. Then Heracles drove the cattle and the goats out of the stables; he broke through the foundations and he made channels for the two rivers Alpheus and Peneius. The waters flowed through the stables, and in a day all the uncleanness was washed away. Then Heracles turned the rivers back into their own courses.

He was not given the reward he had bargained for, however.

He went back to Mycenæ with the tale of how he had cleaned the stables. "Ten labors remain for me to do now," he said.

"Eleven," said Eurystheus. "How can I allow the cleaning of King Augeias's stables to you when you bargained for a reward for doing it?"

Then while Heracles stood still, holding himself back from striking him, Eurystheus ran away and hid himself in the jar. Through his heralds he sent word to Heracles, telling him what the other labors would be.

He was to clear the marshes of Stympbalus of the man-eating birds that gathered there; he was to capture and bring

to the king the golden-horned deer of Coryneia; he was also to capture and bring alive to Mycenæ the boar of Erymanthus.

Heracles came to the marshes of Stymphalus. The growth of jungle was so dense that he could not cut his way through to where the man-eating birds were; they sat upon low bushes within the jungle, gorging themselves upon the flesh they had carried there.

For days Heracles tried to hack his way through. He could not get to where the birds were. Then, thinking he might not be able to accomplish this labor, he sat upon the ground in despair.

It was then that one of the immortals appeared to him; for the first and only time he was given help from the gods.

It was Athena who came to him. She stood apart from Heracles, holding in her hands brazen cymbals. These she clashed together. At the sound of this clashing the Stymphalean birds rose up from the low bushes behind the jungle. Heracles shot at them with those unerring arrows of his. The man-eating birds fell, one after the other, into the marsh.

Then Heracles went north to where the Coryneian deer took her pasture. So swift of foot was she that no hound nor hunter had ever been able to overtake her. For the whole of a year Heracles kept Golden Horns in chase, and at last, on the side of the Mountain Artemision, he caught her. Artemis, the goddess of the wild things, would have punished Heracles for capturing the deer, but the hero pleaded with her, and she relented and agreed to let him bring the deer to Mycenæ and show her

to King Eurystheus. And Artemis took charge of Golden Horns while Heracles went off to capture the Erymanthean boar.

He came to the city of Psophis, the inhabitants of which were in deadly fear because of the ravages of the boar. Heracles made his way up the mountain to hunt it. Now on this mountain a band of centaurs lived, and they, knowing him since the time he had been fostered by Chiron, welcomed Heracles. One of them, Pholus, took Heracles to the great house where the centaurs had their wine stored.

Seldom did the centaurs drink wine; a draft of it made them wild, and so they stored it away, leaving it in the charge of one of their band. Heracles begged Pholus to give him a draft of wine; after he had begged again and again the centaur opened one of his great jars.

Heracles drank wine and spilled it. Then the centaurs that were without smelt the wine and came hammering at the door, demanding the drafts that would make them wild. Heracles came forth to drive them away. They attacked him. Then he shot at them with his unerring arrows and he drove them away. Up the mountain and away to far rivers the centaurs raced, pursued by Heracles with his bow.

One was slain, Pholus, the centaur who had entertained him. By accident Heracles dropped a poisoned arrow on his foot. He took the body of Pholus up to the top of the mountain and buried the centaur there. Afterward, on the snows of Erymanthus, he set a snare for the boar and caught him there.

Upon his shoulders he carried the boar to Mycenæ and he led the deer by her golden horns. When Eurystheus had looked upon them the boar was slain, but the deer was loosed and she fled back to the Mountain Artemision.

King Eurystheus sat hidden in the great jar, and he thought of more terrible labors he would make Heracles engage in. Now he would send him oversea and make him strive with fierce tribes and more dread monsters. When he had it all thought out he had Heracles brought before him and he told him of these other labors.

He was to go to savage Thrace and there destroy the man-eating horses of King Diomedes; afterward he was to go amongst the dread women, the Amazons, daughters of Ares, the god of war, and take from their queen, Hippolyte, the girdle that Ares had given her; then he was to go to Crete and take from the keeping of King Minos the beautiful bull that Poseidon had given him; afterward he was to go to the Island of Erytheia and take away from Geryoneus, the monster that had three bodies instead of one, the herd of red cattle that the two-headed hound Orthus kept guard over; then he was to go to the Garden of the Hesperides, and from that garden he was to take the golden apples that Zeus had given to Hera for a marriage gift — where the Garden of the Hesperides was no mortal knew.

So Heracles set out on a long and perilous quest. First he went to Thrace, that savage land that was ruled over by Diomedes, son of Ares, the war god. Heracles broke into the

stable where the horses were; he caught three of them by their heads, and although they kicked and bit and trampled he forced them out of the stable and down to the seashore, where his companion, Abderus, waited for him. The screams of the fierce horses were heard by the men of Thrace, and they, with their king, came after Heracles. He left the horses in charge of Abderus while he fought the Thracians and their savage king. Heracles shot his deadly arrows amongst them, and then he fought with their king. He drove them from the seashore, and then he came back to where he had left Abderus with the fierce horses.

They had thrown Abderus upon the ground, and they were trampling upon him. Heracles drew his bow and he shot the horses with the unerring arrows that were dipped with the gall of the Hydra he had slain. Screaming, the horses of King Diomedes raced toward the sea, but one fell and another fell, and then, as it came to the line of the foam, the third of the fierce horses fell. They were all slain with the unerring arrows.

Then Heracles took up the body of his companion and he buried it with proper rights, and over it he raised a column. Afterward, around that column a city that bore the name of Heracles's friend was built.

Then toward the Euxine Sea he went. There, where the River Themiscyra flows into the sea he saw the abodes of the Amazons. And upon the rocks and the steep place he saw the warrior women standing with drawn bows in their hands. Most dan-

gerous did they seem to Heracles. He did not know how to approach them; he might shoot at them with his unerring arrows, but when his arrows were all shot away, the Amazons, from their steep places, might be able to kill him with the arrows from their bows.

While he stood at a distance, wondering what he might do, a horn was sounded and an Amazon mounted upon a white stallion rode toward him. When the warrior-woman came near she cried out, "Heracles, the Queen Hippolyte permits you to come amongst the Amazons. Enter her tent and declare to the queen what has brought you amongst the never-conquered Amazons."

Heracles came to the tent of the queen. There stood tall Hippolyte with an iron crown upon her head and with a beautiful girdle of bronze and iridescent glass around her waist. Proud and fierce as a mountain eagle looked the queen of the Amazons: Heracles did not know in what way he might conquer her. Outside the tent the Amazons stood; they struck their shields with their spears, keeping up a continuous savage din.

"For what has Heracles come to the country of the Amazons?" Queen Hippolyte asked.

"For the girdle you wear," said Heracles, and he held his hands ready for the struggle.

"Is it for the girdle given me by Ares, the god of war, that you have come, braving the Amazons, Heracles?" asked the queen.

"For that," said Heracles.

"I would not have you enter into strife with the Amazons," said Queen Hippolyte. And so saying she drew off the girdle of bronze and iridescent glass, and she gave it into his hands.

Heracles took the beautiful girdle into his hands. Fearful he was that some piece of guile was being played upon him, but then he looked into the open eyes of the queen and he saw that she meant no guile. He took the girdle and he put it around his great brows; then he thanked Hippolyte and he went from the tent. He saw the Amazons standing on the rocks and the steep places with bows bent; unchallenged he went on, and he came to his ship and he sailed away from that country with one more labor accomplished.

The labor that followed was not dangerous. He sailed over sea and he came to Crete, to the land that King Minos ruled over. And there he found, grazing in a special pasture, the bull that Poseidon had given King Minos. He laid his hands upon the bull's horns and he struggled with him and he overthrew him. Then he drove the bull down to the seashore.

His next labor was to take away the herd of red cattle that was owned by the monster Geryoneus. In the Island of Erytheia, in the middle of the Stream of Ocean, lived the monster, his herd guarded by the two-headed hound Orthus — that hound was the brother of Cerberus, the three-headed hound that kept guard in the Underworld.

Mounted upon the bull given Minos by Poseidon, Heracles

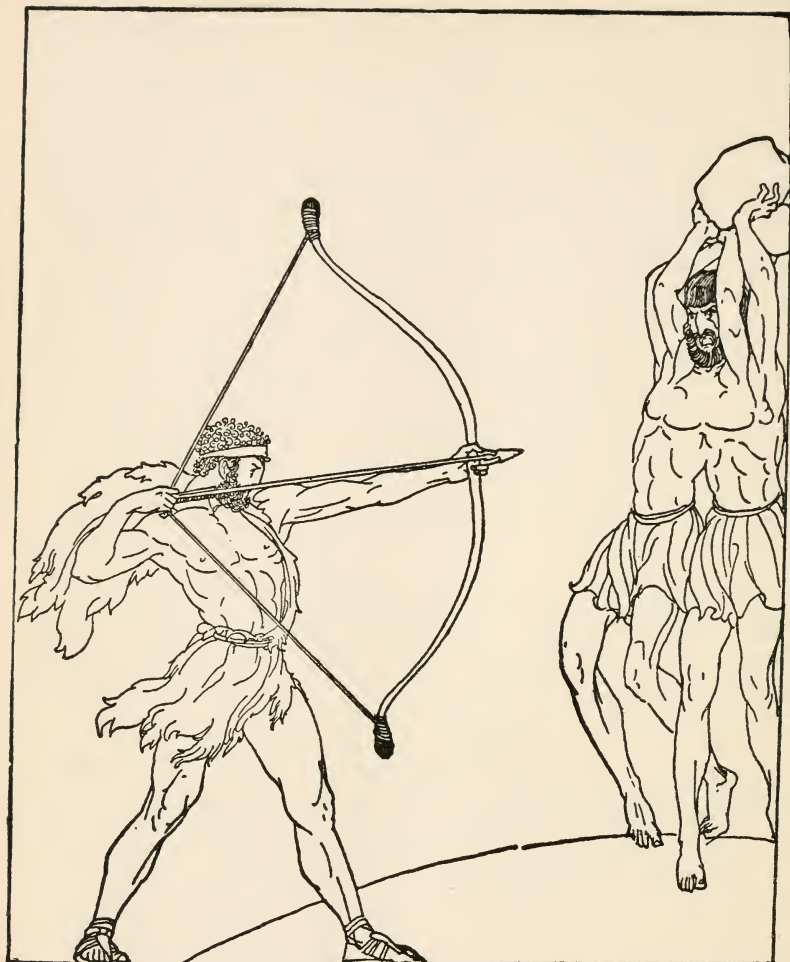
fared across the sea. He came even to the straits that divide Europe from Africa, and there he set up two pillars as a memorial of his journey — the Pillars of Heracles that stand to this day. He and the bull rested there. Beyond him stretched the Stream of Ocean; the Island of Erytheia was there, but Heracles thought that the bull would not be able to bear him so far.

And there the sun beat upon him, and drew all strength away from him, and he was dazed and dazzled by the rays of the sun. He shouted out against the sun, and in his anger he wanted to strive against the sun. Then he drew his bow and shot arrows upward. Far, far out of sight the arrows of Heracles went. And the sun god, Helios, was filled with admiration for Heracles, the man who would attempt the impossible by shooting arrows at him; then did Helios fling down to Heracles his great golden cup.

Down, and into the Stream of Ocean fell the great golden cup of Helios. It floated there wide enough to hold all the men who might be in a ship. Heracles put the bull of Minos into the cup of Helios, and the cup bore them away, toward the west, and across the Stream of Ocean.

Thus Heracles came to the Island of Erytheia. All over the island straggled the red cattle of Geryoneus, grazing upon the rich pastures. Heracles, leaving the bull of Minos in the cup, went upon the island; he made a club for himself out of a tree and he went toward the cattle.

The hound Orthus bayed and ran toward him; the two-



headed hound that was the brother of Cerberus sprang at Heracles with poisonous foam upon his jaws. Heracles swung his club and struck the two heads off the hound. And where the foam of the hound's jaws dropped down a poisonous plant sprang up. Heracles took up the body of the hound, and swung it around and flung it far out into the Ocean.

Then the monster Geryoneus came upon him. Three bodies he had instead of one; he attacked Heracles by hurling great stones at him. Heracles was hurt by the stones. And then the monster beheld the cup of Helios, and he began to hurl stones at the golden thing, and it seemed that he might sink it in the sea, and leave Heracles without a way of getting from the island. Heracles took up his bow and he shot arrow after arrow at the monster, and he left him dead in the deep grass of the pastures.

Then he rounded up the red cattle, the bulls and the cows, and he drove them down to the shore and into the golden cup of Helios where the bull of Minos stayed. Then back across the Stream of Ocean the cup floated, and the bull of Crete and the cattle of Geryoneus were brought past Sicily and through the straits called the Hellespont. To Thrace, that savage land, they came. Then Heracles took the cattle out, and the cup of Helios sank in the sea. Through the wild lands of Thrace he drove the herd of Geryoneus and the bull of Minos, and he came into Mycenæ once more.

But he did not stay to speak with Eurystheus. He started off to find the Garden of the Hesperides, the Daughters of the

Then he saw the guardian of the tree. Beside its trunk a dragon lay, and as Heracles came near the dragon showed its glittering scales and its deadly claws.

The apples were within reach, but the dragon, with its glittering scales and claws, stood in the way. Heracles shot an arrow; then a tremor went through Ladon, the sleepless dragon; it screamed and then lay stark. The maidens cried in their grief; Heracles went to the tree, and he plucked the golden apples and he put them into the pouch he carried. Down on the ground sank the Hesperides, the Daughters of the Evening Land, and he heard their laments as he went from the enchanted garden they had guarded.

Back from the ends of the earth came Heracles, back from the place where Atlas stood holding the sky upon his weary shoulders. He went back through Asia and Libya and Egypt, and he came again to Mycenæ and to the palace of Eurystheus.

He brought to the king the herd of Geryoneus; he brought to the king the bull of Minos; he brought to the king the girdle of Hippolyte; he brought to the king the golden apples of the Hesperides. And King Eurystheus, with his thin white face, sat upon his royal throne and he looked over all the wonderful things that the hero had brought him. Not pleased was Eurystheus; rather was he angry that one he hated could win such wonderful things.

He took into his hands the golden apples of the Hesperides. But this fruit was not for such as he. An eagle snatched the

branch from his hand, and the eagle flew and flew until it came to where the Daughters of the Evening Land wept in their garden. There the eagle let fall the branch with the golden apples, and the maidens set it back upon the tree, and behold! it grew as it had been growing before Heracles plucked it.

The next day the heralds of Eurystheus came to Heracles and they told him of the last labor that he would have to set out to accomplish — this time he would have to go down into the Underworld, and bring up from King Aidoneus's realm Cerberus, the three-headed hound.

Heracles put upon him the impenetrable lion's skin and set forth once more. This might indeed be the last of his life's labors: Cerberus was not an earthly monster, and he who would struggle with Cerberus in the Underworld would have the gods of the dead against him.

But Heracles went on. He journeyed to the cave Tainaron, which was an entrance to the Underworld. Far into that dismal cave he went, and then down, down, until he came to Acheron, that dim river that has beyond it only the people of the dead. Cerberus bayed at him from the place where the dead cross the river. Knowing that he was no shade, the hound sprang at Heracles, but he could neither bite nor tear through that impenetrable lion's skin. Heracles held him by the neck of his middle head so that Cerberus was neither able to bite nor tear nor bellow.

Then to the brink of Acheron came Persephone, queen of the



Underworld. She declared to Heracles that the gods of the dead would not strive against him if he promised to bring Cerberus back to the Underworld, carrying the hound downward again as he carried him upward.

This Heracles promised. He turned around and he carried Cerberus, his hands around the monster's neck while foam dripped from his jaws. He carried him on and upward toward the world of men. Out through a cave that was in the land of Trœzen Heracles came, still carrying Cerberus by the neck of his middle head.

From Trœzen to Mycenæ the hero went and men fled before him at the sight of the monster that he carried. On he went toward the king's palace. Eurystheus was seated outside his palace that day, looking at the great jar that he had often hidden in, and thinking to himself that Heracles would never appear to affright him again. Then Heracles appeared. He called to Eurystheus, and when the king looked up he held the hound toward him. The three heads grinned at Eurystheus; he gave a cry and scrambled into the jar. But before his feet touched the bottom of it Eurystheus was dead of fear. The jar rolled over, and Heracles looked upon the body that was all twisted with fright. Then he turned around and made his way back to the Underworld. On the brink of Acheron he loosed Cerberus, and the bellow of the three-headed hound was heard again.

II

It was then that Heracles was given arms by the gods — the sword of Hermes, the bow of Apollo, the shield made by Hephæstus; it was then that Heracles joined the Argonauts and journeyed with them to the edge of the Caucasus, where, slaying the vulture that preyed upon Prometheus's liver, he, at the will of Zeus, liberated the Titan. Thereafter Zeus and Prometheus were reconciled, and Zeus, that neither might forget how much the enmity between them had cost gods and men, had a ring made for Prometheus to wear; that ring was made out of the fetter that had been upon him, and in it was set a fragment of the rock that the Titan had been bound to.

The Argonauts had now won back to Greece. But before he saw any of them he had been in Oichalia, and had seen the maiden Iole.

The king of Oichalia had offered his daughter Iole in marriage to the hero who could excel himself and his sons in shooting with arrows. Heracles saw Iole, the blue-eyed and childlike maiden, and he longed to take her with him to some place near the Garden of the Hesperides. And Iole looked on him, and he knew that she wondered to see him so tall and so strongly knit even as he wondered to see her so childlike and delicate.

Then the contest began. The king and his sons shot wonderfully well, and none of the heroes who stood before Heracles had a chance of winning. Then Heracles shot his arrows.

No matter how far away they moved the mark, Heracles struck it and struck the very center of it. The people wondered who this great archer might be. And then a name was guessed at and went around — Heracles!

When the king heard the name of Heracles he would not let him strive in the contest any more. For the maiden Iole would not be given as a prize to one who had been mad and whose madness might afflict him again. So the king said, speaking in judgment in the market place.

Rage came on Heracles when he heard this judgment given. He would not let his rage master him lest the madness that was spoken of should come with his rage. So he left the city of Oichalia declaring to the king and the people that he would return.

It was then that, wandering down to Crete, he heard of the Argonauts being near. And afterward he heard of them being in Calydon, hunting the boar that ravaged Æneus's country. To Calydon Heracles went. The heroes had departed when he came into the country, and all the city was in grief for the deaths of Prince Meleagrus and his two uncles.

On the steps of the temple where Meleagrus and his uncles had been brought Heracles saw Deianira, Meleagrus's sister. She was pale with her grief, this tall woman of the mountains; she looked like a priestess, but also like a woman who could cheer camps of men with her counsel, her bravery, and her good companionship; her hair was very dark and she had dark eyes.

would set him to do housework, to carry water, and set vessels on the tables, and clear the vessels away. Omphale set him to spin with a spindle as the women did. And often she would put on Heracles's lion skin and go about dragging his club, while he, dressed in woman's garb, washed dishes and emptied pots.

But he would lose patience with these servant's tasks, and then Omphale would let him go away and perform some great exploit. Often he went on long journeys and stayed away for long times. It was while he was in slavery to Omphale that he liberated Theseus from the dungeon in which he was held with Peirithous, and it was while he still was in slavery that he made his journey to Troy.

At Troy he helped to repair for King Laomedon the great walls that years before Apollo and Poseidon had built around the city. As a reward for this labor he was offered the Princess Hesione in marriage; she was the daughter of King Laomedon, and the sister of Priam, who was then called, not Priam but Podarces. He helped to repair the wall, and two of the Argonauts were there to aid him: one was Peleus and the other was Telamon. Peleus did not stay for long: Telamon stayed, and to reward Telamon Heracles withdrew his own claim for the hand of the Princess Hesione. It was not hard on Heracles to do this, for his thoughts were ever upon Deianira.

But Telamon rejoiced, for he loved Hesione greatly. On the day they married Heracles showed the two an eagle in the sky.

He said it was sent as an omen to them — an omen for their marriage. And in memory of that omen Telamon named his son "Aias"; that is, "Eagle."

Then the walls of Troy were repaired and Heracles turned toward Lydia, Omphale's home. Not long would he have to serve Omphale now, for his three years' slavery was nearly over. Soon he would go back to Calydon and wed Deianira.

As he went along the road to Lydia he thought of all the pleasantries that had been made in Omphale's house and he laughed at the memory of them. Lydia was a friendly country, and even though he had been in slavery Heracles had had his good times there.

He was tired with the journey and made sleepy with the heat of the sun, and when he came within sight of Omphale's house he lay down by the side of the road, first taking off his armor, and laying aside his bow, his quiver, and his shield. He awakened up to see two men looking down upon him; he knew that these were the Cercopes, robbers who waylaid travelers upon this road. They were laughing as they looked down on him, and Heracles saw that they held his arms and his armor in their hands.

They thought that this man, for all his tallness, would yield to them when he saw that they had his arms and his armor. But Heracles sprang up, and he caught one by the waist and the other by the neck, and he turned them upside down and tied them together by the heels. Now he held them securely

and he would take them to the town and give them over to those whom they had waylaid and robbed. He hung them by their heels across his shoulders and marched on.

But the robbers, as they were being bumped along, began to relate pleasantries and mirthful tales to each other, and Heracles, listening, had to laugh. And one said to the other, "O my brother, we are in the position of the frogs when the mice fell upon them with such fury." And the other said, "Indeed nothing can save us if Zeus does not send an ally to us as he sent an ally to the frogs." And the first robber said, "Who began that conflict, the frogs or the mice?" And thereupon the second robber, his head reaching down to Heracles's waist, began:

THE BATTLE OF THE FROGS AND MICE

A warlike mouse came down to the brink of a pond for no other reason than to take a drink of water. Up to him hopped a frog. Speaking in the voice of one who had rule and authority, the frog said:

"Stranger to our shore, you may not know it, but I am Puff Jaw, king of the frogs. I do not speak to common mice, but you, as I judge, belong to the noble and kingly sort. Tell me your race. If I know it to be a noble one I shall show you my kingly friendship."

The mouse, speaking haughtily, said: "I am Crumb Snatcher, and my race is a famous one. My father is the heroic Bread

Nibbler, and he married Quern Licker, the lovely daughter of a king. Like all my race I am a warrior who has never been wont to flinch in battle. Moreover, I have been brought up as a mouse of high degree, and figs and nuts, cheese and honey-cakes is the provender that I have been fed on."

Now this reply of Crumb Snatcher pleased the kingly frog greatly. "Come with me to my abode, illustrious Crumb Snatcher," said he, "and I shall show you such entertainment as may be found in the house of a king."

But the mouse looked sharply at him. "How may I get to your house?" he asked. "We live in different elements, you and I. We mice want to be in the driest of dry places, while you frogs have your abodes in the water."

"Ah," answered Puff Jaw, "you do not know how favored the frogs are above all other creatures. To us alone the gods have given the power to live both in the water and on the land. I shall take you to my land palace that is the other side of the pond."

"How may I go there with you?" asked Crumb Snatcher the mouse, doubtfully.

"Upon my back," said the frog. "Up now, noble Crumb Snatcher. And as we go I will show you the wonders of the deep."

He offered his back and Crumb Snatcher bravely mounted. The mouse put his forepaws around the frog's neck. Then Puff Jaw swam out. Crumb Snatcher at first was pleased to

feel himself moving through the water. But as the dark waves began to rise his mighty heart began to quail. He longed to be back upon the land. He groaned aloud.

"How quickly we get on," cried Puff Jaw; "soon we shall be at my land palace."

Heartened by this speech, Crumb Snatcher put his tail into the water and worked it as a steering oar. On and on they went, and Crumb Snatcher gained heart for the adventure. What a wonderful tale he would have to tell to the clans of the mice!

But suddenly, out of the depths of the pond, a water snake raised his horrid head. Fearsome did that head seem to both mouse and frog. And forgetful of the guest that he carried upon his back, Puff Jaw dived down into the water. He reached the bottom of the pond and lay on the mud in safety.

But far from safety was Crumb Snatcher the mouse. He sank and rose, and sank again. His wet fur weighed him down. But before he sank for the last time he lifted up his voice and cried out and his cry was heard at the brink of the pond:

"Ah, Puff Jaw, treacherous frog! An evil thing you have done, leaving me to drown in the middle of the pond. Had you faced me on the land I should have shown you which of us two was the better warrior. Now I must lose my life in the water. But I tell you my death shall not go unavenged — the cowardly frogs will be punished for the ill they have done to me who am the son of the king of the mice."

Then Crumb Snatcher sank for the last time. But Lick Platter, who was at the brink of the pond, had heard his words. Straightway this mouse rushed to the hole of Bread Nibbler and told him of the death of his princely son.

Bread Nibbler called out the clans of the mice. The warrior mice armed themselves, and this was the grand way of their arming:

First, the mice put on greaves that covered their forelegs. These they made out of bean shells broken in two. For shield, each had a lamp's centerpiece. For spears they had the long bronze needles that they had carried out of the houses of men. So armed and so accoutered they were ready to war upon the frogs. And Bread Nibbler, their king, shouted to them: "Fall upon the cowardly frogs, and leave not one alive upon the bank of the pond. Henceforth that bank is ours, and ours only. Forward!"

And, on the other side, Puff Jaw was urging the frogs to battle. "Let us take our places on the edge of the pond," he said, "and when the mice come amongst us, let each catch hold of one and throw him into the pond. Thus we will get rid of these dry bobs, the mice."

The frogs applauded the speech of their king, and straightway they went to their armor and their weapons. Their legs they covered with the leaves of mallow. For breastplates they had the leaves of beets. Cabbage leaves, well cut, made their strong shields. They took their spears from the pond side —

deadly pointed rushes they were, and they placed upon their heads helmets that were empty snail shells. So armed and so accoutered they were ready to meet the grand attack of the mice.

When the robber came to this part of the story Heracles halted his march, for he was shaking with laughter. The robber stopped in his story. Heracles slapped him on the leg and said: "What more of the heroic exploits of the mice?" The second robber said, "I know no more, but perhaps my brother at the other side of you can tell you of the mighty combat between them and the frogs." Then Heracles shifted the first robber from his back to his front, and the first robber said: "I will tell you what I know about the heroical combat between the frogs and the mice." And thereupon he began:

The gnats blew their trumpets. This was the dread signal for war.

Bread Nibbler struck the first blow. He fell upon Loud Crier the frog, and overthrew him. At this Loud Crier's friend, Reedy, threw down spear and shield and dived into the water. This seemed to presage victory for the mice. But then Water Larker, the most warlike of the frogs, took up a great pebble and flung it at Ham Nibbler who was then pursuing Reedy. Down fell Ham Nibbler, and there was dismay in the ranks of the mice.

Then Cabbage Climber, a great-hearted frog, took up a clod

of mud and flung it full at a mouse that was coming furiously upon him. That mouse's helmet was knocked off and his forehead was plastered with the clod of mud, so that he was well-nigh blinded.

It was then that victory inclined to the frogs. Bread Nibbler again came into the fray. He rushed furiously upon Puff Jaw the king.

Leeky, the trusted friend of Puff Jaw, opposed Bread Nibbler's onslaught. Mightily he drove his spear at the king of the mice. But the point of the spear broke upon Bread Nibbler's shield, and then Leeky was overthrown.

Bread Nibbler came upon Puff Jaw, and the two great kings faced each other. The frogs and the mice drew aside, and there was a pause in the combat. Bread Nibbler the mouse struck Puff Jaw the frog terribly upon the toes.

Puff Jaw drew out of the battle. Now all would have been lost for the frogs had not Zeus, the father of the gods, looked down upon the battle.

"Dear, dear," said Zeus, "what can be done to save the frogs? They will surely be annihilated if the charge of yonder mouse is not halted."

For the father of the gods, looking down, saw a warrior mouse coming on in the most dreadful onslaught of the whole battle. Slice Snatcher was the name of this warrior. He had come late into the field. He waited to split a chestnut in two and to put the halves upon his paws. Then, furiously dashing amongst

the frogs, he cried out that he would not leave the ground until he had destroyed the race, leaving the bank of the pond a playground for the mice and for the mice alone.

To stop the charge of Slice Snatcher there was nothing for Zeus to do but to hurl the thunderbolt that is the terror of gods and men.

Frogs and mice were awed by the thunder and the flame. But still the mice, urged on by Slice Snatcher, did not hold back from their onslaught upon the frogs.

Now would the frogs have been utterly destroyed; but, as they dashed on, the mice encountered a new and a dreadful army. The warriors in these ranks had mailed backs and curving claws. They had bandy legs and long-stretching arms. They had eyes that looked behind them. They came on sideways. These were the crabs, creatures until now unknown to the mice. And the crabs had been sent by Zeus to save the race of the frogs from utter destruction.

Coming upon the mice they nipped their paws. The mice turned around and they nipped their tails. In vain the boldest of the mice struck at the crabs with their sharpened spears. Not upon the hard shells on the backs of the crabs did the spears of the mice make any dint. On and on, on their queer feet and with their terrible nippers, the crabs went. Bread Nibbler could not rally them any more, and Slice Snatcher ceased to speak of the monument of victory that the mice would erect upon the bank of the pond.

With their heads out of the water they had retreated to, the frogs watched the finish of the battle. The mice threw down their spears and shields and fled from the battleground. On went the crabs as if they cared nothing for their victory, and the frogs came out of the water and sat upon the bank and watched them in awe.

Heracles had laughed at the diverting tale that the robbers had told him; he could not bring them then to a place where they would meet with captivity or death. He let them loose upon the highway, and the robbers thanked him with high-flowing speeches, and they declared that if they should ever find him sleeping by the roadway again they would let him lie. Saying this they went away, and Heracles, laughing as he thought upon the great exploits of the frogs and mice, went on to Omphale's house.

Omphale, the widow, received him mirthfully, and then set him to do tasks in the kitchen while she sat and talked to him about Troy and the affairs of King Laomedon. And afterward she put on his lion's skin, and went about in the courtyard dragging the heavy club after her. Mirthfully and pleasantly she made the rest of his time in Lydia pass for Heracles, and the last day of his slavery soon came, and he bade good-by to Omphale, that pleasant widow, and to Lydia, and he started off for Calydon to claim his bride Deianira.

Beautiful indeed Deianira looked now that she had ceased to

mourn for her brother, for the laughter that had been under her grief always now flashed out even while she looked priestesslike and of good counsel; her dark eyes shone like stars, and her being had the spirit of one who wanders from camp to camp, always greeting friends and leaving friends behind her. Heracles and Deianira wed, and they set out for Tiryns, where a king had left a kingdom to Heracles.

They came to the River Evenus. Heracles could have crossed the river by himself, but he could not cross it at the part he came to, carrying Deianira. He and she went along the river, seeking a ferry that might take them across. They wandered along the side of the river, happy with each other, and they came to a place where they had sight of a centaur.

Heracles knew this centaur. He was Nessus, one of the centaurs whom he had chased up the mountain the time when he went to hunt the Erymanthean boar. The centaurs knew him, and Nessus spoke to Heracles as if he had friendship for him. He would, he said, carry Heracles's bride across the river.

Then Heracles crossed the river, and he waited on the other side for Nessus and Deianira. Nessus went to another part of the river to make his crossing. Then Heracles, upon the other bank, heard screams — the screams of his wife, Deianira. He saw that the centaur was savagely attacking her.

Then Heracles leveled his bow and he shot at Nessus. Arrow after arrow he shot into the centaur's body. Nessus loosed his

hold on Deianira, and he lay down on the bank of the river, his lifeblood streaming from him.

Then Nessus, dying, but with his rage against Heracles unabated, thought of a way by which the hero might be made to suffer for the death he had brought upon him. He called to Deianira, and she, seeing he could do her no more hurt, came close to him. He told her that in repentance for his attack upon her he would bestow a great gift upon her. She was to gather up some of the blood that flowed from him; his blood, the centaur said, would be a love philter, and if ever her husband's love for her waned it would grow fresh again if she gave to him something from her hands that would have this blood upon it.

Deianira, who had heard from Heracles of the wisdom of the centaurs, believed what Nessus told her. She took a phial and let the blood pour into it. Then Nessus plunged into the river and died there as Heracles came up to where Deianira stood.

She did not speak to him about the centaur's words to her, nor did she tell him that she had hidden away the phial that had Nessus's blood in it. They crossed the river at another point and they came after a time to Tiryns and to the kingdom that had been left to Heracles.

There Heracles and Deianira lived, and a son who was named Hyllos was born to them. And after a time Heracles was led into a war with Eurytus — Eurytus who was king of Oichalia.

Word came to Deianira that Oichalia was taken by Heracles, and that the king and his daughter Iole were held captive.



Deianira knew that Heracles had once tried to win this maiden for his wife, and she feared that the sight of Iole would bring his old longing back to him.

She thought upon the words that Nessus had said to her, and even as she thought upon them messengers came from Heracles to ask her to send him a robe — a beautifully woven robe that she had — that he might wear it while making a sacrifice. Deianira took down the robe; through this robe, she thought, the blood of the centaur could touch Heracles and his love for her would revive. Thinking this she poured Nessus's blood over the robe.

Heracles was in Oichalia when the messengers returned to him. He took the robe that Deianira sent, and he went to a mountain that overlooked the sea that he might make the sacrifice there. Iole went with him. Then he put on the robe that Deianira had sent. When it touched his flesh the robe burst into flame. Heracles tried to tear it off, but deeper and deeper into his flesh the flames went. They burned and burned and none could quench them.

Then Heracles knew that his end was near. He would die by fire, and knowing that he piled up a great heap of wood and he climbed upon it. There he stayed with the flaming robe burning into him, and he begged of those who passed to fire the pile that his end might come more quickly.

None would fire the pile. But at last there came that way a young warrior named Philoctetes, and Heracles begged of him to fire the pile. Philoctetes, knowing that it was the will of

the gods that Heracles should die that way, lighted the pile. For that Heracles bestowed upon him his great bow and his unerring arrows. And it was this bow and these arrows, brought from Philoctetes, that afterward helped to take Priam's city.

The pile that Heracles stood upon was fired. High up, above the sea, the pile burned. All who were near that burning fled — all except Iole, that childlike maiden. She stayed and watched the flames mount up and up. They wrapped the sky, and the voice of Heracles was heard calling upon Zeus. Then a great chariot came and Heracles was borne away to Olympus. Thus, after many labors, Heracles passed away, a mortal passing into an immortal being in a great burning high above the sea.